

# Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

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Wednesday, 13 May, 2009

## OFFICE SEEKS ANSWERS ON SOUTH CHANNEL NON CONFORMANCE

The Office of the Environmental Monitor has sought information from the Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) on the details and cause of a partial non conformance against the Channel Deepening Project's rule book, which took place in the south of Port Phillip Bay last month.

Independent Environmental Monitor Mick Bourke said the Office was notified of the dredging slip-up at midday on Friday 8 May, 2009, and later that day PoMC issued a media statement.

"PoMC notified us that on 19 April, 2009 the *Queen of the Netherlands* dredged sand from outside the approved work area in the South Channel, near Hovell Pile, about three kilometres off the coast of Rosebud," Mr Bourke said.

"For around one and a half minutes the vessel dredged outside the prescribed area for a distance of about 100 metres.

"PoMC believes there is no evidence to indicate any environmental damage, but we have asked for documentation to confirm this," Mr Bourke said.

A PoMC investigation is currently underway and the Office expects to receive the investigation report in the coming weeks.

Mr Bourke said the Office had requested information on the non conformance to help inform its advice to project regulators on the environmental performance of the dredging project.

"On Friday we asked PoMC for information on the details and cause of the non conformance, what actions were being taken to address the circumstances that led to the non conformance, confirmation of the impacts and potential effects on the environment, and the timeline of events between 19 April and 8 May, 2009," Mr Bourke said.

"My role as the Environmental Monitor requires me to investigate all Environmental Management Plan (EMP) non conformances and provide my findings to the project's regulators and the Victorian community."

Mr Bourke said an independent audit of the project's compliance with the EMP, due to start next month, would have identified the non conformance.

"While the Office is satisfied PoMC notified the relevant agencies of the non conformance, if this had not occurred, the up coming audit would have revealed it. That's why we have commissioned the audits – to independently check that the project is being delivered in line with the EMP's rules," he said.

Mr Bourke said the latest data from the network of 11 conformance turbidity monitoring buoys indicated turbidity levels across the Bay remained below the project's environmental safeguards.

"The data shows that none of the environmental limits set to protect the Bay's sensitive plants and animals were reached last week," Mr Bourke said.

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